Judges overrule US govt's move to suspend food aid

BOSTON: President Donald Trump's administration cannot suspend food aid for millions of Americans during the ongoing government shutdown, two federal judges ruled on Friday, saying the government must use contingency funds to pay for the benefits.

The dual rulings by judges in Massachusetts and Rhode Island came in a pair of lawsuits seeking to block the US Department of Agriculture's suspension on Saturday of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme benefits, known as SNAP or food stamps.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress have been trading blame for the prolonged shutdown, which has put SNAP benefits in jeopardy. It was not immediately clear whether the rulings mean that benefits will be paid on Nov 1. Both judges ordered the administration to report back to them on Monday on how it will comply with their decisions.

Trump said on social media that the federal government likely does not have legal authority to pay SNAP benefits during the government shutdown, and that his lawyers are asking courts "to clarify how we can legally fund SNAP as soon as possible." "If we are given the appropriate legal direction by the Court, it will BE MY HONOR to provide the funding," Trump wrote.

SNAP benefits are available to Americans whose income is less than 130pc of the federal poverty line, or $1,632 a month for a one-person household and $2,215 for a two-person household in many areas. States are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the benefits, which are paid out monthly.

The USDA has said insufficient funds exist to pay full benefits to 42 million low-income Americans, as they cost $8.5 billion to $9 billion per month. The administration said the agency lacked authority to pay them until Congress passes a spending bill ending a government shutdown that began October 1.

COMMERCE CITY (Colorado): People wait in line outside an emergency food bank on Friday.—Reuters

But US District Judge John McConnell in Providence, at the end of a hearing in a lawsuit brought by cities, nonprofit organisations and a union, said the administration's decision not to tap $5.25 billion in contingency funds to fund November benefits was arbitrary. "There is no doubt and it is beyond argument that irreparable harm will begin to occur if it hasn't already occurred in the terror it has caused some people about the availability of funding for food, for their family," McConnell said.

He said the agency must distribute the emergency money "as soon as possible," and if the money is insufficient, the agency should determine if money from a separate fund with around $23 billion could be used.

Minutes earlier, US District Judge Indira Talwani in Boston ruled that the administration was wrong in saying it was legally barred from using the contingency funds to pay for SNAP benefits during the shutdown. The Boston ruling came in a lawsuit brought by 25 Democratic-led states and the District of Columbia.

The judge, who like McConnell was appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama, said the "suspension of SNAP payments was based on the erroneous conclusion that the contingency funds could not be used to ensure continuation of SNAP payments."

The USDA's shutdown plan, released last month, had said contingency funds were available to keep funding SNAP benefits if Congress did not enact spending legislation to avert the lapse in funding that began Oct 1. But the department last week updated its website to say that no benefits would be issued on Nov 1 and that "the well has run dry," prompting the filing of the lawsuits.

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said on Friday morning that the argument by Democrats in Congress and Democratic-led states — that the USDA has money to spend on November SNAP benefits — was a "lie." "It is a contingency fund that can only flow if the underlying appropriation is approved," Rollins told reporters, speaking on Capitol Hill alongside House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson.

During a Thursday hearing, Justice Department attorney Jason Altabet warned that partial payments, unprecedented in the program's history, could be difficult, saying that officials were "legitimately scared" about whether the antiquated systems some states use could handle their distribution. "The agency thinks it would be catastrophic," he said.

Both McConnell and Talwani indicated, however, that the administration had the ability to fund SNAP benefits in full if it used its discretion to tap other funding to cover the shortfall.—Reuters

Temple stampede kills nine in Andhra Pradesh

MUMBAI: At least nine people were crushed to death after a massive crowd surge at a Hindu temple in southern India's Andhra Pradesh on Saturday, the state's governor said.

The stampede occurred at the Venkateswara temple in Kasibugga in Srikakulam district, where a crowd of devotees had gathered.

Andhra Pradesh governor S. Abdul Nazeer expressed his "profound grief on the death of nine pilgrims in the stampede".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave his condolences to those "who have lost their near and dear ones". "I pray that the injured recover soon," Modi added.

Deadly stampedes and crowd crushes are a common occurrence at big Indian gatherings and religious festivals.

In September, at least 36 people were killed after a stampede broke out at a campaign rally of popular actor-turned-politician Vijay in Tamil Nadu state.

And in June, a sudden crowd surge at a Hindu festival in the coastal state of Odisha triggered a stampede that killed at least three people and injured several others.

The previous month, six people were crushed to death in the western state of Goa after thousands gathered for a popular fire-walking ritual.—Agencies

Vance defends wish for wife to become Christian

WASHINGTON: US Vice President JD Vance has defended saying that he hopes his wife Usha — who was raised as a Hindu — converts to Christianity.

A fervent Catholic who himself converted in 2019, Vance said on Friday that pushback against his remarks reeks of "anti-Christian bigotry." The 41-year-old was asked about raising their three children in an interfaith marriage at a Turning Point USA event honoring assassinated right-wing activist Charlie Kirk at the University of Mississippi on Wednesday.

"Do I hope eventually that she is somehow moved by the same thing that I was moved in by church? Yeah, I honestly do wish that," he said.

"But if she doesn't, then God says everybody has free will, and so that doesn't cause a problem for me."—AFP

MWANZA: Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan speaks during the ruling party's closing campaign rally on Oct 28. The president won the election with 97.66 percent of the vote, the electoral commission said on Saturday. But the polls lacked credibility as opposition parties were barred. Violent protests gripped the country this week which, according to some estimates, claimed 700 lives.—AFP

Seoul seeks Beijing's help for engaging Pyongyang

GYEONGJU: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung sought Chinese President Xi Jinping's help in efforts to resume talks with nuclear-armed neighbour North Korea on Saturday, while Xi told Lee he was willing to widen cooperation and jointly tackle the challenges they face.

Lee hosted Xi at a state summit and dinner after an Asia-Pacific leaders' forum in the South Korean city of Gyeongju, marking Xi's first visit to the US ally in 11 years.

Beijing attaches great importance to relations with Seoul and sees South Korea as an inseparable cooperative partner, Xi said ahead of the summit according to Lee's office.

Lee, who was elected president in a snap election in June, has promised to strengthen ties with the United States while not antagonising China and seeking to reduce tensions with the North.

"I am very positive about the situation in which conditions for engagement with North Korea are being formed," Lee said.—Reuters

Pakistan for removal of barriers to N-cooperation

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for the removal of barriers that prevent equitable and non-discriminatory access to civil nuclear cooperation, describing it as a matter of fundamental importance.

Speaking during a UN General Assembly debate on the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) this week, Pakistan underscored its "vast experience in operating a safe, secure, and fully safeguarded nuclear power programme."

Reaffirming its "capabilities and commitment" to nuclear safety, Islamabad stressed the need for "unrestricted collaboration and fair access to civil nuclear technologies, particularly for countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change."—Correspondent

Families separated, children killed as survivors flee Sudan's 'apocalyptic' war

Army's allies accuse paramilitary group of killing over 2,000 civilians

PORT SUDAN: Survivors fleeing the Sudanese city of El-Fasher said on Saturday that paramilitary fighters separated families and killed children in front of their parents, with tens of thousands still trapped following the city's fall.

Germany's top diplomat Johann Wadephul described the situation as "apocalyptic" while fresh satellite images suggested mass killings were likely ongoing, five days after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces seized El-Fasher.

At war with the regular army since April 2023, the RSF pushed the military out of its last stronghold in the vast Darfur region after a grinding 18-month siege. Since the takeover, reports have emerged of summary executions, sexual violence, attacks on aid workers, looting and abductions, while communications remain largely cut off.

"I don't know if my son Mohamed is dead or alive. They took all the boys," Zahra, a mother of six who fled El-Fasher to the nearby town of Tawila, said in a satellite phone interview.

Before reaching the nearby RSF-controlled town of Garni, she said RSF fighters stopped them and took her sons, aged 16 and 20. "I begged them to let them go," she said, but the fighters only released her 16-year-old son. Another survivor, Adam, said two of his sons, aged 17 and 21, were killed in front of him.

"They told them they had been fighting (for the army), and then they beat me on my back with a stick," he said.

In Garni, RSF fighters saw the blood of Adam's sons on his clothes and accused him of being a fighter. After hours of investigations, they let him go. The survivors' full names have been withheld for their safety.

The UN says more than 65,000 people have fled El-Fasher since Sunday but tens of thousands remain trapped. Around 260,000 people were in the city before the RSF's final assault.

"Large numbers of people remain in grave danger and are being prevented by the Rapid Support Forces and its allies from reaching safer areas," Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said.

The group said that only 5,000 people had managed to make their way to Tawila, about 70 kilometres to the west. The numbers of people arriving in Tawila "don't add up, while accounts of large-scale atrocities are mounting", MSF's head of emergencies Michel Olivier Lacharite said.

'Mass killing is continuing'

Several eyewitnesses told MSF that a group of 500 civilians, along with soldiers from the military and the army-allied Joint Forces, had attempted to flee on Sunday, but most were killed or captured by the RSF and their allies.

Survivors reported that people were separated based on their gender, age or presumed ethnicity, and that many were still being held for ransom. Darfur is home to a number of non-Arab ethnic groups, who make up a majority of the region's population, in contrast to Sudan's dominant Sudanese Arabs.

Hayat, a mother of five who fled the city, previously said that "young men travelling with us were stopped" along the way by paramilitaries and "we don't know what happened to them".

The UN said the death toll from the RSF's assault on the city may be in the hundreds, while army allies accused the paramilitary group of killing over 2,000 civilians.

Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab suggested that mass killings were likely continuing in and around El-Fasher. The lab, which uses satellite imagery and open-source information to document human rights abuses during wars, said fresh images from Friday showed "no large-scale movement" of civilians fleeing the city, giving them reason to believe much of the population may be "dead, captured, or in hiding".

The lab identified at least 31 clusters of objects consistent with human bodies between Sunday and Friday, across neighbourhoods, university grounds and military sites. "Indicators that mass killing is continuing are clearly visible," the lab said.

At a conference in Bahrain on Saturday, Wadephul said Sudan was "absolutely an apocalyptic situation, the greatest humanitarian crisis of the world". The RSF said that it had arrested several fighters accused of abuses during the capture of El-Fasher, but UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher questioned the group's commitment to investigating atrocities.

Both the RSF — descended from the Janjaweed militias accused of genocide in Darfur two decades ago — and the army have faced war crimes accusations over the course of the conflict. The US has previously determined that the has RSF committed genocide in Darfur. The RSF has received weapons and drones from the UAE, according to UN reports.

An Emirati official in a statement said, "we categorically reject any claims of providing any form of support to either warring party and condemn atrocities".

Meanwhile, the army has drawn on support from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkiye. El-Fasher's capture gives the RSF full control over all five state capitals in Darfur, effectively splitting Sudan along an east-west axis, with the army controlling the north, east and centre.

UN officials have warned that the violence is now spreading to the neighbouring Kordofan region, with reports emerging of "large-scale atrocities perpetrated" by the RSF.

The wider conflict has killed tens of thousands, displaced nearly 12 million and created the world's largest displacement and hunger crises.—AFP

WAPDA Decade of Dams

CAREER OPPORTUNITY AS GENERAL MANAGER (SECURITY)

WAPDA is an autonomous body working under Ministry of Water Resources, Government of Pakistan. It has a network of large, medium and small dams, power houses, residential colonies and offices across the country.

JOB DESCRIPTION

- To assist Authority in matters relating to safety and security of WAPDA's key installations and projects.
- Incharge of entire security setup of WAPDA.
- Coordination with Law Enforcement Agencies, Project Authorities and field Security officers for developing SOPs and Strategies to secure WAPDA's core assets and foreigners deployed at projects.
- Development and Management of an effective and efficient security force by assessing its need, managing its training and procurement of required weapons/ammunition/security related equipment to ensure security of WAPDA assets.
- Coordination and liaison with other government departments and agencies to secure WAPDA's property for encroachment and other dangers etc.
- To ex-officio serve as Director General of WAPDA Security Force and perform all function, duties and responsibilities as contained in WAPDA Security Force Act, 2025.
- Any other task / responsibility assigned by the Authority.

TENURE, SALARY AND FACILITIES

The appointment will be on contract basis in BPS-20 initially for a period of 3 years, (extendable on yearly basis) based on satisfactory performance and organizational requirement.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

A Retired Brigadier or equivalent from the Armed Forces, preferably from fighting Arm, must have served commanded in operational area especially in counter terrorism operations (as Lt Col / Brig). Must be Pakistan Staff College qualified.

AGE LIMIT

Maximum 55 years

QUOTA

Open Merit

PLACE OF POSTING

Lahore

INSTRUCTIONS & GENERAL CONDITIONS

- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview.
- Government employees shall apply through proper channel and submit requisite NOC / permission.
- NOC for employment in Civil Department from AG Branch is mandatory.
- No TA / DA will be admissible to candidates for interview by WAPDA.
- Educational degrees must be from HEC recognized Universities.
- Original documents must be presented by the candidates at the time of interview.
- Applications carrying incomplete / incorrect information or received after last date of receipt shall be summarily rejected.
- The candidates who have been weeded out of service on disciplinary ground, retired compulsorily or debarred for future employment are not eligible to apply.
- WAPDA reserves the right to withhold / cancel the recruitment process at any stage.

HOW TO APPLY

- Prescribed application form is available on WAPDA's website www.wapda.gov.pk.
- Applications on prescribed form along-with attested copies of all educational / experience certificates, CNIC and 02 recent passport size photographs shall be submitted to **Director (Recruitment) WAPDA, B-26, WAPDA House, Lahore through courier / postal service within 15 days of publication of advertisement.**
- For any information / query, candidates may email on dgrectt@wapda.gov.pk or contact +92-42-99200483.

DIRECTOR (RECRUITMENT) WAPDA
B-26, WAPDA HOUSE, LAHORE. PHONE NO. 042-99200483

PID(L)1181/25 Website: www.wapda.gov.pk PRD(L)/WAPDA/059(2025-26)

DONATE FOR DIAMER BASHA & MOHMAND DAMS

38-year-old woman charged in Louvre heist

PARIS: A woman arrested this week along with four other suspects over the unprecedented jewel heist at the Louvre on Saturday appeared before a magistrate who will decide whether to detain her.

The 38-year-old woman was in tears as she confirmed that she lives in the northern La Courneuve suburb of Paris, a journalist said. She has been charged with complicity in organised theft and criminal conspiracy with a view to committing a crime.

At the request of the prosecution, the hearing continued behind closed doors. The Paris public prosecutor's office did not specify how many suspects would be brought before the court.

Last month, thieves wielding power tools raided the Louvre, the world's most visited art museum, in broad daylight, taking just seven minutes to steal jewellery worth an estimated $102 million.

French authorities initially announced the arrest of two suspects, and this week prosecutors said that police had arrested five more people, including a prime suspect.

The five detentions took place in and around Paris, particularly in Seine-Saint-Denis north of Paris.

One of the five people arrested this week was released without charge on Friday, said his lawyers, Sofia Bougrine and Noemie Gorin.

"In these serious crime cases, we find that waves of arrests look more like drift nets," Bougrine said, pointing to what she said was the indiscriminate nature of some of the arrests.

The first two men arrested previously were charged with theft and criminal conspiracy after "partially admitting to the charges", Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuau said this week.

One is a 34-year-old Algerian national living in France, who was identified by DNA traces found on one of the scooters used to flee the heist.

The second suspect is a 39-year-old unlicensed taxi driver from the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers. Both were known to the police for having committed thefts.

The first was arrested as he was about to board a plane for Algeria at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport.

The second was apprehended shortly after near his home, and there was no evidence to suggest that he was planning to go abroad, prosecutors said.

They are suspected of being the two who broke into the gallery while two accomplices waited outside.

The stolen loot remains missing.

The thieves dropped a diamond- and emerald-studded crown that once belonged to Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, as they escaped. The burglars made off with eight other items of jewellery.

Among them are an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoleon I gave his second wife, Empress Marie-Louise, and a diadem that once belonged to the Empress Eugenie, which is dotted with nearly 2,000 diamonds.—AFP

Gaza's displaced find shelter in Arafat's villa

GAZA CITY: The residence in Gaza of the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat stands in ruins, like most other buildings in the devastated territory, but the remains of the once-lavish villa now also host several displaced families.

Television footage shows the house, converted into a museum after the Palestinian leader's death in 2004 and bearing murals in his honour, surrounded by rubble.

Located in the Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza City, the house was heavily damaged by Israeli strikes during the two years of Israeli bombing since Oct 2023.

Ashraf Nafeth Abu Salem, a university professor who found shelter in the residence with his own and other families, said he had decided to clean up the rubble inside the courtyard, which was "largely destroyed and burned".

A metal door that opens from the villa onto the street is adorned with a poster of Yasser Arafat, wearing his trademark keffiyeh and sunglasses.

Behind him in the image is a smaller picture of the current president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmud Abbas.

Abu Salem leafed through an old, yellowed book bearing Arafat's portrait.

"We belong to the generation of the first Intifada (in 1987). We grew up throwing stones," he said.

"For us, President Abu Ammar was a model and a symbol of the Palestinian national struggle," the professor said, referring to Arafat by the affectionate name used by supporters.

Three-quarters of the buildings in Gaza Strip have been destroyed in the two-year conflict, producing over 61 million tonnes of debris.—AFP